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*Letter from the Secretary of the Geographical Society at Bombay
to the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society of London.*
Received 2nd May, 1833.

[IMMEDIATELY on the receipt of the following communication, the Council resolved to publish it with this Part of the Journal, as offering an example set by one of the most important dependencies of Great Britain, which it is hoped will be imitated by others. A frequent correspondence kept up, as here proposed, between Branch Societies in our distant Colonies and the Parent Society in England, could not fail to be attended with the most beneficial consequences to the progress of Geographical Discovery; and communications thus made could be transmitted either in manuscript or in print, and published as Appendices to the Journal of the Central Society. By such means, full advantage would be taken of the favourable position of England for extending geographical science; and the praise now due to the founders of the Bombay Society for having taken the lead in so desirable a course of proceeding, would be shared by those who may hasten to follow it.]

SIR,

I AM directed by the President and Members of the Bombay Geographical Society to request that you will take an early opportunity of informing the Royal Geographical Society of London, that an institution of a similar kind has recently been formed at Bombay, having in view the elucidation of the geography of Western India and the surrounding countries.

The President and Members of the Bombay Geographical Society feel satisfied that an announcement of this nature, transmitted from any part of the globe, would be received with pleasure and approbation by the Royal Geographical Society; but they flatter themselves that, coming as it does from a quarter whose localities are so interesting, it will be peculiarly acceptable to the Society, and will be favoured with its early attention and encouraging regard.

It is scarcely necessary to describe how favourable the position of Bombay is for the cultivation of geographical science, whether in reference to Hindostan in particular, or to the various regions and islands usually comprehended under the general name of India, and belonging to the Asiatic continent. Immediately to the westward of our Presidency lie the Persian and Arabian territories, to both of which access is rendered frequent, and comparatively easy, by the Gulf extending along the shores of the first, and the different seas encompassing three-fourths of the latter. Adjoining us on the north, we have the Malwa country, the seat of the celebrated cities of Ougein, Mandhow, and Palebothræ;

and farther off in the same direction, the unexplored deserts of Tartary stretch towards the southern boundaries of the Russian empire. Turning the view eastward, we find ourselves in the neighbourhood of Thibet, China, and the Malay Peninsula, and in the range of the vast archipelago of the great Indian Ocean. With nearly all the regions above enumerated Bombay enjoys an intercourse either direct or indirect ; and her port is the theatre of a commerce which annually assembles the inhabitants and the ships of many different and far separated countries.

But in enumerating the objects of geographical interest which exist in the neighbourhood of the Bombay Presidency, the Society does not intend it to be understood that it as yet possesses the means of pursuing or embracing them all, or even a considerable part of them. Nevertheless, it enjoys several facilities of the kind, which, if properly and judiciously directed, may lead to important and valuable results. From the extensiveness of the Honourable East India Company's dominion, European officers, military and civil, are found distributed over a vast tract of country, and possess full opportunities of acquiring a perfect local knowledge of their respective districts, either by personal observation, or through the medium of the natives, whose language they generally understand. On the other hand, the Honourable Company's ships of war are always cruising in the Arabian and Persian Gulfs, and in the Indian Ocean ; and the naval gentlemen in command of them have already rendered important services to geography by their surveys and charts, and are capable of accomplishing much more in that way. The Bombay Geographical Society has already applied to the local government for permission to inspect the public records of the marine department ; but as this cannot be acceded to without a reference to the Court of Directors, the Society will not enjoy the privilege in question until an answer is received from the latter authority, which will doubtless be a favourable one, as the Honourable Company have always shown themselves strongly disposed to encourage the scientific pursuits of their servants in India.

Possessing these advantages, actual and prospective, the Bombay Geographical Society is anxious to form a junction with that of London, and to be considered a branch of the latter ; not only that it may in this way insure its own stability, but that it may acquire additional usefulness and efficiency from the patronage and counsels of the European institution. In accordance with these views, I am instructed by the Bombay Geographical Society to request that it may be permitted to associate itself with its prototype, the London one ; and that a correspondence may forthwith commence between the two associations in furtherance of their common objects.

The Bombay branch will be happy to receive instructions from the London Society, in reference to the general plan of operations which it ought to adopt; and any geographical inquiries suggested by the latter will meet with due attention, and be answered with as little delay as possible. A circular, recently published by the Bombay Society, is herewith enclosed, as illustrative of the Society's views and objects; and it will be esteemed a favour if the London institution will transmit to its sister association at this Presidency any document, or prospectus, or code of instructions, which it may have promulgated with a similar design, and which may be in any way calculated for the instruction and guidance of the promoters of geographical science in Western India.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

J. FRASER HEDDLE, Secretary.

Bombay, June 6th, 1832.

Bombay Geographical Society.

In announcing the institution of a Geographical Society in Bombay, it seems requisite in a summary way to direct the attention of the community to its specific objects, and to point out how these may be best promoted and accomplished. But we must first remark, that it is a common opinion that geography, taken in its strict sense, includes merely a knowledge of the figure of the earth, and of its different divisions, and of the latitudes and longitudes of the various places comprehended in these, with a description of seas, harbours, coasts, and chains of mountains. This erroneous impression leads many persons to conceive that the study in question is a dry and unattractive one, when in reality the objects which it embraces exceed in number, variety, and delightfulness, those which fall within the limits of any other science whatever; nor is an individual excluded from pursuing it with pleasure and success, because he may be unable to use a sextant, or to take a survey of an island or bay, or discover the position of any particular parts of the earth's surface; qualifications of this kind being requisite in the cultivation of only one department of geography, instead of constituting the species of knowledge which forms the whole of the science.

Geography, in its proper and most extended signification, consists of three grand divisions, viz., the mathematical, the physical, and the political. Mathematical geography comprehends the determination of longitudes and latitudes, trigonometrical surveys of islands and coasts, the art of measuring the height of moun-

tains, and of making maps and charts, and also various subjects connected with navigation and the exploring of unknown countries. We conceive it unnecessary to speak at large of the extensive field for the cultivation of this department of the science which is open in our immediate neighbourhood, and which we have such favourable opportunities of visiting and inspecting; nor shall we do more than allude to the individuals within whose province the object in question will immediately be. The shores and islands of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, and the archipelagoes which extend along the Malabar coast, are not yet accurately laid down in our charts; and a large proportion of the islets composing the latter remain unvisited and unknown, while the assigned bearings of the coasts of Arabia Felix likewise require verification by the nautical geographer. We look with confidence to the officers of the Indian navy for the gradual accomplishment of these objects, and their contributions in this department of the science will, we have every reason to expect, form some of the richest and most valuable of those materials which the Bombay Geographical Society anticipates receiving from its members and supporters. We may also hope for some assistance of a similar kind from another quarter. The commanders of many of the trading ships that enter Bombay harbour might often communicate useful information by allowing their log-books to be inspected by some qualified persons, with the view of comparing their nautical remarks upon questionable points, with those that had previously been recorded by other individuals. The Society will likewise derive considerable assistance from the observations of persons visiting the interior of India, who may possess sufficient astronomical knowledge to enable them to determine the latitudes or longitudes of some of the places that occur in their route. It is universally admitted that even the largest maps of Hindostan are extremely defective, and that most of the places of minor importance are inaccurately laid down. Hence, any traveller who would merely take the general and relative bearings of the towns and villages, and measure the distances between them, would do an important service to geography, and materially increase our local knowledge of the interior districts of India. It is more easy to contribute something to the mathematical department of the science than most people are willing to suppose; and a simple and accurate itinerary will in many instances prove more valuable and satisfactory to the geographer than a learned and theoretical dissertation.

We will now shortly explain the objects that more particularly fall within the range of the second, or physical, division of geographical science. These are, the history of the productions of the earth, whether living or inanimate, in so far as respects the extent

of their diffusion and the causes which operate in confining them to particular countries ; the influence which climate exerts upon their qualities and external character ; the migration of quadrupeds from one region to another ; the history of the introduction of the graminæ and cerealia into countries in which they are not indigenous ; the various physical peculiarities of the human race, such as complexion, conformation of features and bodily constitutions, with the causes of these ; and, in short, all kinds of researches and observations that are calculated to make us acquainted with the local distribution of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and to determine with precision within what particular geographical limits their various genera are confined. The countries lying around us afford abundant scope for new observations upon our own species, many of the singular tribes who inhabit India and its islands being as yet nearly unknown, or at least very imperfectly described. The nomade communities that wander in the jungles of the Mysore, the natives of the Andaman Isles, the Battas, a cannibal horde in the interior of Sumatra, the Papuas of the Eastern Archipelago, and various other nations, demand the early attention of the physical geographer, as they will in all probability sooner or later be extirpated, or at least will gradually lose their identity by intermixture with other races of people. The migrations and irruptions of different nations likewise come under this department of our science, as well as researches into the period at which any race of foreigners arrived in any particular country. We may inquire, for instance, how long ago it is since the Arabs first began to visit the eastern islands, where Islamism has, by their means, made such rapid progress, and is now so extensively diffused. Most of the great islands in the Eastern Archipelago being inhabited by two distinct races of men, one of which occupies the coast and the other the interior of the country, it will be interesting to those who enjoy the requisite opportunities, to study the causes of this anomaly, and to examine the physical peculiarities of each tribe, in order to ascertain whence they have respectively derived their origin, and which of the two are the aborigines of the soil.

The third division of our science is the political one, or, in other words, the geography of the human mind. Its principal objects are to examine the influence which climate, territory, and soil exert upon the character of nations and communities ; to observe how far the different productions of the earth affect the manners and habits of those who cultivate and consume them ; and to estimate the effect of geographical position in modifying the forms of government and political institutions of social men. An acquaintance with the annals, the traditions, the systems of religion, the superstitions, and the languages of different countries,

is essential to the advancement of political geography ; and whoever contributes any information of this kind, however trivial it may appear to be, will promote the objects of the Bombay Geographical Society, and perhaps throw unexpected light upon some obscure part of the history of our species.

Let no one be startled by the number of the objects which we have enumerated as belonging to geographical science. It is not expected, nor is it possible, that any one mind (except that of a Humboldt) should embrace them all ; but it is expected, and it is certain, that out of the variety presented to view, every person will be able to select some subject suited to his taste and to his opportunities of observation ; and if he will make this his study, whatever it may be, and eventually communicate the result to the Geographical Society, he will do all that its warmest supporters either hope or desire. The difficulties which people residing in Europe experience in making any addition to geographical science can have no existence here, for a wide, and untrodden, and a profoundly interesting field of observation lies around ; and however superficially we may turn up its soil, we shall be sure to find a reward for our labour. We therefore beg leave to call upon the civil and military gentlemen of this and of the sister Presidencies to render us all possible assistance in the prosecution of our design, and to send us communications without delay, leaving to themselves the choice of the subjects, and of the branch of geographical science to which these may relate, and requesting that they will not be too fastidious as to their form, or so diffident as to imagine that their contributions, however small, will not prove highly valuable and acceptable to the Society.

But it must be recollected, that an institution of the kind to which we have just been soliciting the support of the community, can neither become stable nor efficient unless it possess some definite and tangible materials which will serve as a foundation for its first labours, and a rallying point calculated to draw the attention of individuals to those objects which we are desirous that they should cultivate and pursue. For this reason it is proposed that the Bombay Geographical Society should lose no time in collecting a library, and also maps and charts of a description likely to assist the researches of its members ; but as the Society's limited resources will not at present admit of its making any purchases of the kind, donations of books, &c., are earnestly solicited from those individuals who belong to the institution, or take an interest in its prosperity. Those volumes, which frequent reference and perusal may have rendered almost useless to their owners, will form acceptable gifts to the Society, as will also charts, atlases, globes, &c., whether new or old, or on a great or small scale. It

may be affirmed that a view of the latter objects is calculated more than anything else to excite a taste for geographical science, particularly if the beholder has previously made any progress in that branch of knowledge,—a map or chart is then like a panorama to him ; for every coast which it represents suggests the name and discoveries of some celebrated navigator ; in tracing the outline of a region or district, he sees its animal and vegetable productions embodied before him ; and in the appellation and site of a town he reads a chapter of the history of the human race. It is therefore to be hoped that the members of the Society will contribute all that they can spare to the formation of a library ; and they ought to recollect that their mutual donations will place within each other's command materials which would otherwise have remained in the exclusive possession of particular individuals.

The Geographical Society has likewise in view the formation of a collection of philosophical instruments for the use of those of its members, and the community generally, who may choose to borrow them for the purpose of making observations. As few of the requisite instruments are procurable in India, the General Committee of Management have resolved, that 400 rupees of the Society's funds shall immediately be employed in the purchase of mountain barometers, hygrometers, &c., from some approved maker in Europe.

It may be mentioned in conclusion, that a letter has recently been despatched to the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, acquainting him that a similar institution has been formed in Bombay, and proposing that a junction should take place between the two associations, in order that they may the more successfully pursue their common objects. A favourable reply to that letter, and to the one which the Bombay government have addressed to the Court of Directors in reference to the assistance to be granted to the Society, will probably arrive in eight or nine months hence, by which time it is reasonable to suppose that the Bombay Society will be in such a state of activity as will enable it to derive the most solid advantages from the support of the Court of Directors, and the co-operation of the Society established in London.

Bombay, June 9th, 1832.
